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AUTHOR Ekbatani, Glayol; Pierson, Herbert D.
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses how self assessment can be used to promote faculty awareness about the effectiveness of their instructional methods and materials in a non-threatening, positive atmosphere, and thereby, promote team-building. Through the vehicle of self-evaluation, facilitated by a self-assessment questionnaire on which faculty rate their ideal and actual self correlated to 36 different aspects of pedagogy, the faculty in one English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) department are enhancing their individual instructional methods and developing a sense of community and collegiality. The entire faculty has benefited by developing, administering, analyzing, and discussing the results of the self assessment questionnaire. The process has revealed something about teaching to all of the faculty and nurtured a sense of community and the desire to improve overall instruction. Nine references, two tables, and an appendix consisting of a five-page pilot self-assessment questionnaire (containing 36 five-point scale questions) are included. (KFT)

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Engaging ESL Faculty in Self-Assessment*

Glayol Ekbatani & Herbert D. Pierson

This paper discusses how self-assessment can be used to promote faculty awareness about the effectiveness of their instructional methods and materials in a non-threatening, positive atmosphere and thereby promote team-building. Through the vehicle of self-evaluation facilitated by designing a self-assessment questionnaire on which the faculty rate their ideal and actual self as correlated to 36 different aspects of pedagogy, the faculty in one ESL department are enhancing their individual instructional methods as well as ultimately developing a sense of community and colleagueship.

Running Head: Teacher Self-Assessment, Teacher Evaluation, ESL, Self Evaluation, Team Building

Introduction

Although not without its hazards and anomalies, teacher self-assessment is known (see Carroll, 1981; Austin and Lee, 1967; Seldin, 1975) to be a potentially useful mechanism for faculty development because of its capacity to provide teachers with deeper insights into their individual strengths and weaknesses from a decidedly personal perspective. In consideration of this point of view, and in an effort to foster faculty professional growth and development as well as community, faculty the ESL department in our institution designed and tested a self-assessment procedure in a questionnaire distributed to all faculty members in the program. One of the immediate goals of this exercise was to promote self-understanding and instructional improvement. We believed that the pilot questionnaire we constructed would promote teachers' awareness of their own instructional practices, and provide them with an opportunity to evaluate the

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effectiveness of their instructional methods and materials. However, we also intended that it would foster team building and encourage communication among the faculty.

This exercise comprised several phases. In the initial phase senior faculty members were asked to generate evaluative statements in four distinct areas of ESL pedagogy: teaching methods, materials, rapport with students, and classroom management. As anticipated, the senior instructors produced statements touching upon daily practice for self-understanding as well as statements that reflected self-judgment on their own teaching. The evaluative statements were then synthesized into items on a larger questionnaire consisting of 36 items. The questionnaire was distributed to the entire faculty. Faculty members were asked to rate themselves on a scale of 1-5 (Almost Always - - - Almost Never) both as how they perceived the items reflected their ideal state and how they reflected they perceived their actual state. In the sense the questionnaire really consisted of 72 items. The results of these questionnaires were analyzed and mooted in small faculty groups to promote with the intended purpose to nurture professional awareness, collegiality, and community, but most importantly to promote the enhancement of individual instructional practices. This rest paper will deal with the process and results of this self-assessment exercise.

Teacher Self-Assessment

Much has been written about teacher assessment for the purpose of tenure, retention and promotion, but less about assessment as a means to improve or enhance instructional programs. In perusing the professional literature, we came upon documentation (Cranton, 1978; Lewis & Barber, 1986; Silver & Hanson, 1980) which

indicated that teacher self-assessment could profitably serve a twofold purpose to : 1) promote teacher awareness of their instructional practices; and 2) provide individual teachers with an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of their instructional methods and materials. Ideally, teacher self-reflection and awareness could lead to program enhancement, provided it was approached publicly in a trusting, non-threatening manner.

According to Barber (1990) teacher self-assessment is not a single concept, but rather a powerful mechanism for personal development. Its most useful value is derived from the increased instructional improvement that could result from greater insight into professional strengths and weaknesses on the part of individual practioners. Added support for teacher self-assessment as means of instructional improvement comes from Bailey (1981) who believes that self-assessment not only covers instructional methods, but also serves as an approach to instructional improvement.

Carroll (1981), who has written extensively in this area, suggests that at first glance there are incongruities in teacher self-evaluation. However, if one of the basic aims of teacher assessment are to improve general instruction, then an element of teacher self-evaluation is justified as component in the general assessment process. He stresses that if teacher self-assessment was used along with student evaluation, it might be possible to locate the discrepancies in the ratings, an idea first proposed by Centra (1973). Carroll (1981) ultimately believes that teacher self-evaluation leads to greater teacher cooperation and participation in the improvement of instruction.

Carroll lists 5 major methods of teacher self-assessment. They are:

1. self-rating forms

2. self-reports
3. self-study materials
4. observations of colleagues teaching
5. AV taping of classroom teaching

Self-rating forms are best used with other types of teacher-assessment. Self-reports are written instruments prepared by teachers themselves. Unlike self-rating forms, self-reports generally use an open-ended format consisting of responses to specific questions related to instruction.

However, Carroll (1981) does not ignore the problematic nature of self-assessment, the most transparent being it apparent lack of objectivity. Clearly there is in self-assessment a perceived lack of accuracy and reliability that could preclude it from being a meaningful measure of teacher competence or performance. Moreover, there is the danger that teachers might use self-assessment as means of self-justification, while other teachers might be less than honest for fear of self-incrimination, especially if the results were to be used in a summative manner. Because of these difficulties, Carroll (1981) suggests that teacher self-assessment not be used as an assessment instrument *per se*, but rather as a motivational force in a trusting environment to improve teaching behavior, strategies and techniques. In this way self-assessment supports the internal drive of responsible teachers to improve their professional competence. It is in this spirit that we attempted to use teacher self-assessment in our department.

Questionnaire Design

This pilot project comprised several phases, the first phase being the design of the research instrument which we called the Self-Assessment Questionnaire or simply the

SAQ. (The SAQ is contained in Appendix A.) In the initial phase, six senior faculty members were asked to generate evaluative statements in four distinct areas of ESL pedagogy: 1) teaching methods; 2) instructional materials; 3) rapport with students; and 4) classroom management techniques. As anticipated, the faculty members generated items touching upon daily practice for self-understanding, as well as items that reflected critical judgment about their own teaching. This pool of evaluative items was then standardized and then synthesized into the 36-item SAQ. We distributed the SAQ to all faculty members, asking them to rate their ideal of rating ideal and real self. This methodology was suggested from survey research on higher education conducted by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Boyer, Altbach and Whitelaw, 1994; Altbach, 1996). The preliminary results of this questionnaire discussed in a small faculty "focus group", where teachers so asked to give their initial feedback on SAQ exercise.

Faculty "Focus Group"

The faculty "focus group" was an important aspect of this exercise, as we were determined to use the SAQ as a means to promote team-building among the faculty members. We used the term "focus group" to emulate the contemporary political usage. We believed that a randomly selected "focus group" of faculty members would reflect the opinions and reactions of the rest of he faculty. The focus group consisted of 7 of the 16 faculty members who had completed out the SAQ. These 7 colleagues were invited to meet and discuss their reactions to the SAQ and self-assessment in general in order to provide feedback and an orientation to the researchers when they did their actual data analysis. The "hidden agenda" of this "focus group" was to promote internal faculty harmony in the

unlikely event that the SAQ was perceived as intrusive or threatening to any individual teachers. At the meeting the twofold rationale of the questionnaire was made clear to them This was presented as to promote self-awareness about instructional practices and to provide individual teachers with the opportunity to do some self-evaluation and reflection on their effectiveness of their instructional practices, etc.

The "focus group" was asked to frankly and candidly share their reactions to the SAQ. For this purpose the members were provided with an abbreviated form of the SAQ to refresh their memories. To start the group, the group leader, one of the researchers, posed questions as to whether the group thought the questionnaire was reasonable, relevant, and whether the individual items on the SAQ were appropriate, and whether any significant pedagogical areas were missing from the pilot SAQ?

The discussion produced a straightforward and honest responses. One participant felt that using the dichotomy of the real and ideal had the effect of producing two questionnaires not one, producing an actual questionnaire of 72 items, although on the surface it looked like 36. This was thought to be excessively long. Ideally such a questionnaire should be reduced from 36 to 20 items.

Other participants felt that that rating the ideal self was a very difficult task, verging on the impossible Another faculty member noticed there were several repetitious items and no items addressing computers and educational technology. The wording of the some items in the SAQ was criticized and it was suggested that in a second version some of the items should be phrased in a more neutral manner. All the participants wanted to see the full statistical results, but we were not at that moment prepared to share them. We them. We

felt their input without knowing the statistical results would make their reactions more spontaneous and insightful. Moreover, we wanted their reaction to the questionnaire itself. They would of course see full the statistical results at a later date.

At the meeting, one faculty member suggested that such self-evaluation should be conducted along with student evaluation. This would provide two perceptions of the same reality. However, when all was said and done, it was agreed that the process of taking the SAQ questionnaire did in fact stimulate thinking and produced some consciousness raising on the part of the participants.

Results

Given the nature of our data , we opted to apply the Wilcoxon Rank Test to the raw questionnaire data to determine the presence of significant differences between the Ideal Self and the Actual Self for the 36 items on the SAQ.. Table 1 contains the SAQ items that indicated significant perceived differences between Ideal Self and Actual Self in the area of instructional style. The highest level of significance pertained to such aspects of instructional style such as sufficient varieties of activities (.003), the creativity of lessons (.003), the variety of instructional material, and the quality of questioning techniques used in class (.003). In these areas there was significant difference between perceived real self and the perceived ideal self.

After these four variables, there were two variables which indicated a lower level of significance - variety of presentation (.006) and willingness to modify a seemingly ineffective instructional strategy (.006). Of even lower level of significance was the discrepancy between current teaching methods with current methods in the ESL profession.

Table II presents the perceived differences in ideal self and real self for classroom management styles. The two items possessing the highest levels of significant focussed on the issue of favoring certain students in class (.003) and coping with

Table I Perceived Differences in Ideal and Actual Instructional Styles

Item	P Values
1. My classes have a sufficient variety of activities. (8)	.003
2. My lessons are interesting and creative. (10)	.003
3. My instructional materials are varied and diversified. (16)	.003
4. I use a variety of questions techniques to elicit a response from student. (30)	.003
5. My methods of presentation are diversified and varied (4)	.006
6. If my teaching strategies appear ineffective with one group, I re-evaluate, modify or replace the strategies. (6)	.006
7. My teaching methods reflect the current ideas in ESL.(5)	.008

dominant, assertive students in class (.004). At a lesser level of significance were the issues of keeping a balance between calling on articulate and reticent students (.008) and encouraging quiet, timid students to participate in class (.008).

Table II Perceived Differences in Ideal and Actual Classroom Management Styles

Item	P Values
1. I don't favor certain students in class. (24)	.003
2. I deal positively with dominant, assertive students. (36)	.004
3. In calling on students in class, I keep a balance between articulate, volunteering students and reticent., non-volunteering students. (32)	.008
4. I encourage quiet, timid students to participate in class. (35)	.008

Conclusion

In order to maximize our understanding of these significant results, they were bruited about at a full faculty meeting. This also gave every faculty member the opportunity to

offer an interpretation of the results and to make recommendations for our instructional practices. The discussion was lively, giving each faculty member time to reflect and articulate about, without inhibition, what this self-assessment exercise meant to their teaching. Various items on the SAQ were brought up and talked about in depth in light of the statistical results. Our conclusion from all this was that deveoloping, adminstering, analysing, and discussing the questionnaire was beneficial for the entire department. The SAQ pilot study revealed something about our teaching to all of us, but at the same time the process nurtured community and colleagueship and the desire to improve out instruction. This was a worthwhile outcome indeed.

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Appendix A: Pilot Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ)

This is a self-assessment questionnaire for ESL teachers in which we would like to find how you would rate your ideal and your real teaching *persona*. For this purpose the questionnaire lists typical ESL teacher qualities and competencies and asks you to
rate the degree to which your IDEAL SELF and your REAL SELF possess these qualities or competencies. All the information you provide will be treated as confidential. Do not put your name on the questionnaire. Thank you for your cooperation.

Directions: Below you will find a series of statements about teaching as they relate to your IDEAL SELF - how important it is for you to possess these qualities and competencies, and your REAL SELF - how you would rate yourself on these qualities and competencies at present. Record your immediate reaction to these statements by circling one of the numbers on the 5-point scale below the statements ranging from Almost Always (5) to Almost Never (1).

5	4	3	2	1
Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Almost Never

1. My students work in a productive supervised environment.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

2. My students write a sufficient number of carefully graded and revised essays per semester.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

3. My methods are compatible with the age level and intellectual ability of my class.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

4. My methods of class presentation are diversified and varied.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

5. My teaching methods reflect the current ideas in ESL.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

6. If my teaching strategies appear ineffective with one group, I re-evaluate, modify or replace the strategies.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

7. The aims of the various sections of my lessons are made clear.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

8. My classes have a sufficient variety of activities.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

9. My lessons are organized and systematic.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

10. My lessons are interesting and creative.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

11. I provide supplemental reading and writing materials from current newspapers and magazines.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

12. I use AV materials in my reading and writing classes.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

13. I incorporate error analysis from student writing in my instructional materials.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

14. My teaching materials are congruent with the stated course objectives.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

15. My instructional materials are appropriate to the linguistic level of my students.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

16. My instructional materials are varied and diversified.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

17. My instructional materials are relevant and contemporary in respect to their content.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

18. My instructional materials are taken from a sufficiently broad variety of sources.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

19. My students are encouraged to express themselves honestly in speaking and writing.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

20. I try to understand the cultural backgrounds of my students from what they write and say.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

21. I consider myself a "fair but firm" teacher.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

22. I meet with my students on an informal basis

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

23. I treat my students as unique individuals.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

24. I don't favor certain students in class.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

25. I show an equal amount of interest and respect for the genders, cultures and ethnicities represented in my class.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

26. The sensitivities of my students are taken into account when I choose topics for discussion and writing.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

27. I strive to have students involved in my lessons.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

28. My questions in class are clear.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

29. My instructional materials are varied and diversified.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

30. I use a variety of question techniques to elicit a response from students.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

31. I deal positively with cliques and linguistic segregation in class.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

32. In calling on students in class, I keep a balance between articulate, volunteering students and reticent, non-volunteering students.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

33. I maintain a consistent policy on student lateness and absenteeism.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

34. I encourage collaborative and group learning.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

35. I encourage quiet, timid students to participate in class.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

36. I deal positively with dominant, assertive students.

IDEAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1

REAL SELF 5 4 3 2 1